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ABSTRACT

In 1991, the Task Force on Cooperative Education undertook a study regarding improvement of the cooperative education (CE) system in the United States. The first stage of the project entailed a mail survey of approximately 1,300 selected cooperative and professional educators, cooperative employees, and university state councils to determine current practices and future issues in CE. In the project's second stage, 20-member focus groups and regional panel discussions were held in Minnesota, California, Missouri, and Georgia. Several major CE-related issues were also discussed by a blue ribbon panel of four experts in CE. The survey and focus groups/panel discussions focused on the following aspects of CE: mission and rationale, existing strengths, changing audiences, motivation and funding, technology and materials, priorities for change, and change strategies. The primary purposes of CE were identified, and a plan for renewing/regenerating the CE system on the following three fronts was developed: making the required investments in CE (updating and expanding CE's materials base, educating its educators, and conducting performance-related research); improving national coordination; and expanding CE's base of support. (Appended are a statement of the task force's mission and major activities and lists of focus group and panel participants.) (MN)

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United States Department of Agriculture

Agricultural Cooperative Service

ACS Service Report 36

Cooperative Education Task Force: Final Report

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Executive Summary

In 1991, a Task Force on Cooperative Education began a study on improving the cooperative education system in the United States. In this joint study by USDA's Agricultural Cooperative Service (ACS) and National Council of Farmer Cooperatives (NCFC), information and opinions were gathered from cooperative educators, organizations, and institutions throughout the Nation.

The Vision

From this study, the Task Force developed the following *Vision for Cooperative Education*:

Every individual in the United States should have enough knowledge about the cooperative form of business enterprise to know its general distinguishing characteristics, to assess its appropriateness to meet economic and social needs, and to recognize cooperatives' purposes and benefits. Every cooperative member should have enough knowledge about the cooperative form of business enterprise to know his or her responsibilities toward the cooperative and what is expected in the way of control, finance, and patronage.

Three-Front Plan

The Task Force proposes a *Three-Front Plan* for bringing renewal and regeneration to the cooperative education system. The plan involves making the upfront investment in educational materials and infrastructure, improving national-level coordination, and aggressively marketing cooperative education to key educational decisionmakers.

FRONT I— Making the Investments involves redevelopment of the resource base— materials and human expertise—for providing cooperative education. It calls for expanding, updating, and redesigning basic educational materials, establishing a program to educate the educators, and conducting a program

of research on the performance of cooperative education programs. An infusion of public and private resources is necessary to complete this critical base phase.

FRONT II— Improving National Coordination involves developing structures, functions, and modes of communication to improve coordination of the diverse components of the cooperative education system. One aspect is the creation of a national clearinghouse for improving the widespread availability and use of materials and programs.

FRONT III— Expanding the Base of Support involves establishing an aggressive marketing campaign directed at the leaders in cooperatives and educational institutions to demonstrate the value of investment in cooperative education. The campaign calls for one-on-one peer contacts using the results of performance-related research, knowledge of the improved materials base, and a renewed national commitment to coordination.

Other Findings and Highlights

Why Cooperative Education? Three primary purposes for cooperative education were identified: (1) Setting the stage for successful cooperatives; (2) Providing everyone with enough knowledge about the cooperative form of business enterprise to make an informed assessment of a cooperative as an option; and (3) Providing sufficient understanding to responsible individuals and public policymakers to assure continued support for the cooperative form of business enterprise.

The Changing Education Environment Over the past two decades, the environment for cooperative education has changed in several significant ways. These include changes in the nature of cooperatives and cooperative business, audience demographics, resource constraints, philosophy of coopera-

tive leaders, public perception of the value of cooperative education, technological advances, and preference of many organizations for investing in internal education programs.

How Have Cooperative Education Audiences Changed? A number of changes in the audiences for cooperative education were noted: a decline in numbers of students with farm backgrounds; an aging member base of traditional agricultural cooperatives; growth of urban audiences; growth in variety of uses of cooperatives in non-agricultural settings; blurring of the distinction between rural and urban audiences, emergence of self-interest as a motivating force; increased demands on the time of both students and educators; increased technological sophistication; and questioning attitudes of the general populace.

Strengths of the Present System The present system has several strengths that will be of value in the future. These include a continuing widespread dedication to cooperative education, a basic institutional structure capable of implementing needed educational innovations and improvements, an array of materials and programs currently available, public interest in the rejuvenation of rural America, and renewed interest in public education.

Little Overlap Found Contrary to common perceptions, the Task Force found little overlap in effort among the cooperative education providers. In fact, there is a remarkable level of coordination and assignment or acceptance of roles. Most organizations or institutions serve specific and well-defined audiences with specialized programs geared to those audiences.

What Message Should Cooperative Education Deliver? The basic orientation for cooperative education must be one of self-interest: How individual interests can be better served through

group action. Recipients of cooperative education must be shown how the cooperative form of organization can personally benefit them. Cooperatives must be presented as an effective organizational option within the American business system. While many topics need to be covered within a complete cooperative education program, they must be constantly linked back to cooperative principles in their most basic and easily understood form.

What Are Priorities for Changing Materials? Materials must be individualized both in use and message, with a focus on hands-on activities and approaches. They must be adaptable to short learning periods. Messages must be simple and practical. Control by the end-user, in terms of how and when the materials are used, cannot be compromised. The core of materials used in cooperative education will include traditional written materials and visuals, videos, and software for personal computers. These media and technologies are widely available, highly adaptable, relatively simple to learn and use, and flexible in terms of the timing and duration of use. Providers of materials and programs should focus resources on filling gaps in current offerings using these mainstream technologies.

How Should Materials Be Targeted? Except for some special situations, the basic content and materials for cooperative education are relatively well defined and developed. However, depending on a single format or presentation for a given topic will not be sufficient in the future. Materials must meet the unique needs of specific audiences. Unless educational materials and programs carry the appropriate message to identified audiences, the effectiveness of cooperative education will be diminished.

Who Will Be the Educators? Essential to cooperative education is a core of educators knowledgeable in cooperatives and

cooperative issues. An extensive investment in training this vital educator core is required. Key educator groups should be targeted, including county or State Extension personnel, secondary-level teachers of agricultural education, general business and social studies, university teachers in agribusiness and business, and education specialists within cooperatives.

Ag and Non-Ag Efforts Must Be Merged. The nearly automatic assignment of cooperative education by schools and universities to agricultural departments or programs must change. Cooperatives are not limited to agriculture. The segregation between agricultural and non-agricultural cooperative education cannot be maintained. Bridges must be built between agricultural and other segments of our educational system. Collaborative research and curriculum development is also required.

The National Materials Clearinghouse. Lack of knowledge of availability of materials and programs was repeatedly identified as a problem constraining teaching of cooperative concepts. A central clearinghouse function is needed to collect and widely disseminate information and descriptions of cooperative education tools, programs, and other resources available from all segments of the cooperative community. The system would need to be constantly updated and include materials relating to all types of cooperatives. A speakers bureau function could also be maintained. Funding, broad-based support, and cooperation will be necessary.

Elementary and Secondary School Programs. The primary goal of cooperative teaching in elementary and middle schools is to introduce students to the term "cooperative" and show basic benefits that may be achieved from cooperation. At the secondary level, a fuller description of cooperatives is possible, as a part of business, economics, or social studies programs. Teaching techniques may include working examples,

practicums, and hands-on acquaintance with local cooperatives. Any new burden upon public education systems imposed by the addition of courses or units on cooperative education competes for an already critically limited pool of time and resources. Support for teacher training, purchase of school materials, and other support by cooperatives and their associations will be required. This approach has been used by cooperative organizations in some States to place ACS' "Understanding Cooperatives" in secondary schools. At the elementary school level, NCFC's "Business in Our Town" could be handled the same way.

University Level Programs. At the university level, cooperative topics should be included in courses that address business, economics, management, accounting, or organizational subjects. In some instances, separate courses on cooperatives are appropriate. Expanded cooperative education at the university level will require more appropriate teaching materials, introduction into nonagricultural areas, and a major familiarization of faculty with the role and importance of cooperative businesses. Research is an integral part of the university educational mission and should also be expanded beyond the traditional agricultural economics curricula.

Youth and Educator Groups. Cooperative education planning must involve the many organizations that support educational institutions or groups of students, including adults. Examples are FFA, 4-H, National Vocational Agricultural Teachers Association, National Association of County Agricultural Agents, Ag in the Classroom, farm organizations, and various committees on special areas of education. These organizations are extremely active in the education of youth and play an important role in establishing priorities in public school curriculum development.

Education Within Cooperatives. Successful cooperatives have leaders, members, and employees who understand their roles and obligations within the cooperative setting. Directors are the single most critical audience for cooperative education, because the survival of the cooperative depends on their ability to make complex decisions in some very specialized areas. Employees must also understand the cooperative, because they are the primary direct contact with members. *Only if cooperatives themselves are committed will educational investments be made and programs conducted and only then will the benefits of education be realized by the cooperative.*

Critical Role of State Cooperative Councils. A considerable amount of cooperative educational work done outside individual cooperatives is conducted or facilitated by State cooperative councils. State councils are uniquely positioned to communicate with and influence all parties to the cooperative education process. Because of the critical role they play on behalf of their own members in the cooperative community, State councils must be strongly supported and their needs given high priority.

How Can We Bring About the Necessary Changes? The basic challenge is to induce those who should be involved with cooperative education to become involved. Individuals, institutions, or cooperatives have the incentive to become involved in cooperative education when it contributes to achieving their goals. Out of this, we define two strategies for increasing involvement in education: (1) establish, encourage, or otherwise promote the adoption of goals supportive of cooperative education; or (2) demonstrate how cooperative education contributes to achieving existing goals.

Cooperatives Must Provide Support. Unless cooperatives themselves are motivated to provide privately conducted education, whether by cooperatives themselves or through organi-

zations they fund, few other efforts will be successful. Motivation for cooperative education must be clear and strong, or it will not be translated into funding for specific cooperative education projects and programs.

Cooperative Education Task Force: Final Report

PART I: A VISION FOR COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

Any set of ideas and prescriptions designed to inspire and guide must begin with a vision of what should exist at the end of the journey. The Task Force is guided by a vision of cooperative education—what it should be at and after the turn of the century, and, more importantly, what changes would be seen in the educated populace as a result of cooperative education. We hope all involved in cooperative education see some part of the vision in their work.

Why Cooperative Education?

What justifies spending precious resources on cooperative education? Why are individuals, organizations, and institutions committed to education specifically about cooperatives? What justifies a call for further cooperative education efforts in the face of restricted resources at all levels of the business and education communities?

Before a vision for cooperative education can be defined and justified, the purposes of cooperative education should be identified and accepted with commitment. Full agreement by everyone involved in cooperative education is not required. Each audience for and provider of cooperative education will have its specific purposes. However, several overall purposes of cooperative education were identified in the task force meetings and deliberations. The more important purposes are listed here. They define a mission for cooperative education broad enough to reflect many differing views of education, but specific enough to include the limited goals and focus of highly individual programs.

Better Cooperatives The character of the cooperative business enterprise, based on the voluntary association of individuals with a common specific business or economic purpose, places great responsibility on members, directors, and management to know the essential principles of cooperatives and understand how principles translate into successful cooperative decisionmaking and business conduct. Cooperatives cannot provide services and income to users, their primary purpose, unless they are operated in a businesslike fashion with the full support of knowledgeable members, directors, and management.

One purpose of cooperative education, particularly that directed to members, directors, management, and outside professional advisors, is to set the stage for successful cooperatives.

Appreciation of Options Without a knowledge of what cooperatives are, how they operate, and what they can do for individuals, those who have a need for goods and services cannot assess the benefits of a cooperative business enterprise as one of the ways they may meet their needs. While the general population is aware of sole proprietorships, partnerships, and corporations as ways to organize and conduct business in a market economy, many have had little or no exposure whatsoever to the cooperative business enterprise. If individuals and businesses do not know what cooperatives are, their structure, and what they do for members, they will be limited in their search for ways to satisfy economic needs.

A second purpose of cooperative education is to provide everyone with enough knowledge about the cooperative form of business enterprise so they can to make at least a preliminary, informed assessment of the cooperative approach as a possible option.

Business, Economic, and Public Policy Environment Cooperatives, like all other businesses and institutions, operate within business, economic, and public policy

environments. These environments may be very specific as in the case of a particular law regulating or governing cooperatives, or general as in the character of a market in which cooperatives function. In any case, environments may be greatly affected by what is known and believed about cooperatives by business persons, the public, potential users, and public policymakers.

A third goal of cooperative education is to provide sufficient understanding to responsible individuals and public policymakers to be sure the cooperative form of business enterprise is not disadvantaged by lack of understanding.

What Is Cooperative Education?

For this report, cooperative education is defined as teaching that emphasizes understanding of the cooperative form of business enterprise. Cooperative education is the process by which we affect the relationship between the individual and the cooperative organization in a way that supports and advances the success of the cooperative endeavor. It is a set of activities, actions, and programs designed to enhance an individual's knowledge of and attitudes toward cooperatives and the use of a cooperative approach to solve economic, business, and social problems. Cooperative education is more than promotional or informational activities, job skills training, or general member relations activities. It is not simple, basic financial or business strategy training, although in cooperatives such training, by necessity, incorporates and implements cooperative principles and concepts. In fact, such training frequently provides the setting for cooperative education. Because training on many different subjects integrates cooperative ideas, those involved in such activities, in fact, carry out cooperative education.

Cooperative education activities and programs are designed to help individuals understand the unique principles, structures, and practices that distinguish cooperative

organizations from other types of businesses and how these characteristics translate into benefits for user-owners. Since preservation of these unique characteristics is necessary if the user-owner benefits orientation of the cooperative is to be maintained, cooperative education is necessary for any cooperative organization.

The primary reasons for cooperative education are (1) to facilitate, encourage, and foster the cooperative characteristics of the organization and (2) to ensure a broad-based understanding of the cooperative form of business as a recognized organizational option in a wide variety of circumstances. Cooperative education is essential to ensure that an organization continues to operate in a manner consistent with basic cooperative principles.

Cooperative education has three main components:

1. Explain unique characteristics of the cooperative organizations compared with other forms of business organization,

2. Identify benefits derived from those unique characteristics, and

3. Guide decisions within the context of a cooperative's unique characteristics, thereby preserving the benefits flowing from those characteristics.

Many types of educational activities conducted within the cooperative setting are called cooperative education. However, a distinction should be drawn between education relating strictly to the business operations of the cooperative, technical aspects of operations, and general laws and regulations affecting all businesses, and education regarding matters unique to the cooperatives. Most cooperative education activity includes both.

The conceptual separation of cooperative education from other forms of training and education within an organization should in no way imply the need to separate cooperative education from the other education activities conducted by the firm. In most cases, such a separation would be neither practi-

cal nor wise. Cooperative education can and should be transported on the more general education vehicle. At the very least, it should be invited along for the ride.

The Vision for Cooperative Education

Where do we want cooperative education to be in the near future? What do we seek as providers and financiers of cooperative education? Given our goals for cooperative education, we establish this vision statement for cooperative education in the United States:

> *Every individual in the United States should have enough knowledge about the cooperative form of business enterprise to know its general distinguishing characteristics, assess its appropriateness to meet economic and social needs, and recognize cooperatives' purposes and benefits. Every cooperative member should have enough knowledge about the cooperative form of business enterprise to know his or her responsibilities toward the cooperative and what is expected in the way of control, finance, and patronage.*

This statement has as its corollaries a public and private commitment to cooperative education, school systems at all levels geared to provide such information to students, and educational materials widely distributed and appropriate to a wide range of audience needs. These corollaries are evident in the remaining discussion of cooperative education.

PART II: ASSESSING THE PRESENT ENVIRONMENT

What Has Changed in the Environment for Cooperative Education?

In recent years, the environment for cooperative education has significantly changed in several ways. These include changes in the nature of cooperatives and cooperative busi-

ness, audience demographics, resource constraints, philosophy of cooperatives leaders, public perception of the value of cooperative education, technological advances, and the growing preference of many organizations for investing in internal cooperative education programs.

Cooperatives have been forced by the competitive environment, financial institutions, and accepted business practices to examine all activities and operations in terms of return on investment. The definition of cooperative firms has changed. Some differences between cooperative and noncooperative firms have become less distinct as cooperatives increasingly become involved with nontraditional business alliances, such as joint ventures among cooperatives and with investor-oriented firms. The way cooperative education is approached and its value to the organization may have been affected by these developments.

Public resources devoted to cooperative education have diminished on nearly all fronts over the last two decades. This trend is related to demographic changes, budget crises at all levels of government, and the resulting conversion of many institutions to a focus on income-generating activities.

University involvement in teaching cooperative topics has declined considerably. While a few universities continue to offer full courses on cooperatives, many others have replaced full courses with segments of courses devoted to the topic. Where there were segments, there now may be nothing. University faculty with cooperative expertise—typically marketing or agribusiness specialists—are not being replaced as they retire. Rather, their staff positions are being reassigned to other, more visible fields within the universities. Public schools, especially with agricultural education curricula, are devoting less to cooperatives as the agricultural student base declines. As with universities, specialized expertise in cooperatives is not being replaced. No adequate, concerted effort is underway to bring that training to present agricultural education teachers.

Within the public school and university system, emphasis on cooperatives has been generally confined to the agricultural components of the education system. General business education has rarely included cooperatives as a component of their curriculum or a topic within their courses. Emphasis on the investor-owned firm structure is increasingly favored over other forms of business. Thus, while we have witnessed an increasing interest in pursuing business education, particularly at the MBA level, cooperative topics have been bypassed.

Resources devoted by cooperatives to cooperative education is more problematic. Much of the so-called "cooperative education" is, in fact, general orientation, business training, technical training, job skills training, or member and public relations. Because the term "cooperative education" is often used to mean training different from that discussed in this report, the amount of cooperative funds devoted to such education is unknown. Of some concern has been the apparent "internalization" of cooperative education investment by cooperatives. Cooperatives may be devoting a smaller portion of their expenditures on education to programs offered by outside groups involved with cooperative education, such as the State cooperative councils or national groups providing educational services, although this, too, is difficult to assess. The reasons for this internalization of cooperatives' education expenditures are many and varied, yet, two themes are dominant—the desire to control the timing, content, and presentation of programs and materials; and the loss of a sense of community and common interest in education among the Nation's cooperatives. With the extremely difficult adjustments faced by cooperatives during the 1980s, the concepts of investment in the long-run health of the cooperative community via investment in education were often dominated by the need to merely survive.

These trends have caused many institutions and organizations involved in cooperative education to struggle for survival as well. An atmosphere of competition has created the

appearance, to some observers, that there is considerable overlap and duplication of efforts by different provider groups and institutions. Such observations, the Task Force found, are decidedly untrue. There is little overlap in effort among the cooperative education providers. In fact, there is a remarkable level of coordination and assignment or acceptance of roles. Most organizations or institutions serve specific and well-defined audiences and specialized programs geared to those audiences. Thus, while many groups are involved in the general area of cooperative education, there is very little overlap in function between the groups. Although there continues to be room for improvement in coordination, the cooperative education community shares a common purpose. Where stresses exist between providers, it is more a function of each group struggling to remain financially able to serve in its accepted and defined role, rather than a result of groups attempting to expand their roles into other areas. For groups financially capable of expanding, there remain many voids or gaps to be filled in the cooperative education market.

Information technologies have changed rapidly. Cooperative educators must compete with numerous other media and messages. Computer and video technologies have completely reshaped the methods and strategies for reaching contemporary audiences. Information technologies and technologically based formats have evolved so rapidly that often a particular system is obsolete before most of the mainstream population has been introduced to it.

This presents significant challenges to educators and developers of educational materials. With a movement back to the educational basics and limited resources available, these groups must carefully choose materials in which to invest. They must invest in durability in an atmosphere that can easily render their choices wrong. Educators cannot afford to be highly experimental as they chose appropriate method for the audience and the subject.

Social change and economic pressures have directed cooperative leaders toward a more technocratic and bottom-line orientation. For many, cooperative education has become a tool for improving sales or calming a restive membership. Within the education sector, a similar shift is seen. Much of the philosophical driving force behind cooperative education has been supplanted by a pragmatic allocation of limited resources to areas of most immediate and measurable payoff. Recognition of and adaptation to this trend by providers of educational materials and programs are essential.

Existing Strengths

The environment for cooperative education, however, is not bleak. Response to cooperative education needs should build upon the present foundation. Several key strengths are identified as a starting point for much of the Task Force's encouragement, strengths that may be tapped in every future education activity.

Cooperative Education Tradition Cooperatives in this country, particularly in agriculture, bring a long and illustrious tradition of cooperative education. This tradition is maintained in institutions and among individuals and cooperatives who have been part of cooperative education. Recognition continues among many within the cooperative community that cooperative education is of true importance to the long-term interests of cooperative organizations. The need to increase investment in cooperative education is generally accepted, and the dedication to cooperative education by many cooperative leaders is real and focused. One of the major, but unmeasurable strengths upon which any continuing cooperative education thrust can draw is widespread dedication to it. Institutions, cooperative organizations, and individuals contain a collective pool of commitment. Although not always expressed, and often

diminished by lack of funding or facilitating support, this interest should not be neglected. We should not wax nostalgic upon the days when cooperative education had higher visibility and a greater number of people involved in programs, institutions, and within cooperatives. Many declines in cooperative educational resources are recent enough that dedication remains, and renewal can occur under the right circumstances and with the right incentives.

Institutions The Task Force found a basic institutional structure, public and private, capable of implementing needed educational innovations or improvements. This is not to say changes aren't required, but it does indicate that much groundwork for effective education is in place to make revitalization possible, permitting educators to concentrate on developing programs rather than on the laborious task of establishing new institutions.

Public education institutions include school systems of all kinds. The challenge is not to create entirely new structures, but to inject cooperative education into existing systems. Other public institutions provide support and services for cooperatives. The challenge for these institutions is to adapt to the continually changing educational needs of the cooperative community and the general public.

Institutions used for cooperative education by private providers include State cooperative councils and national organizations with educational missions. All have educational traditions and are capable of responding to current and developing needs in cooperative education, given support and direction.

Those dedicated to improving cooperative education can look to many existing institutions as a strength from which to expand.

Resource Materials The extensive discussions of the need for more and different educational materials in the Task Force Report should not obscure the fact that one of the strengths of

the present cooperative education "system" is the collection of materials and array of programs now available or soon to be made available. Some of these are noted by way of example in discussion of resources and needs for specific audiences, summarized below. Institutions, cooperatives, and school systems need not start from scratch. The challenge for those who prepare materials or conduct programs is to be sure all available information is used, and then take the most efficient steps to expand its usefulness.

Cooperative education can, without long delay, draw upon the work already done in preparation of cooperative materials, incorporating as it does to varying degrees, the substance, design, and creativity of educators at many different levels of education. This base can be used to prepare other information, materials, and programs as needed.

Rural Rejuvenation The growth of public awareness and interest in the rejuvenation of rural America and the rural economy presents a strong argument for a major cooperative education initiative. The cooperative form of business is a highly effective method for accomplishing many rural development goals. This method stresses self-help and citizen involvement and investment.

Renewed Public Interest in Education Renewed public interest in education should be viewed as an opportunity for injecting new cooperative education initiatives into the school systems. It is an opportunity to broaden the audience beyond the strictly agricultural focus of the past. *As attention is turned to the store of knowledge our young persons should be given to live productive and fulfilling lives, a knowledge of cooperative business enterprise should be an essential part of the public education agenda.* Any new funding sources or redirection of emphasis on subjects should be monitored closely and, where possible, be influenced to include cooperative education.

Who Are Cooperative Education Audiences?

Educational goals, techniques, materials, and funding differ according to recipients. Task Force panelists emphasized the need to design activities for each audience. Educators themselves may also be audiences. The Task Force has identified the major audiences of cooperative education. Special needs and the current status of materials and programs appropriate to each audience are addressed later.

Elementary-Level Students and Schools Elementary and middle school students can learn the basics of cooperation in connection with several subjects within the curriculum. At this level, the primary goal is to introduce students to the term "cooperative" and show elementary benefits that may be achieved from cooperation in an organized business. Cooperatives are best described in a setting in which students learn about the ways we do business in a market economy.

The schools (school systems, administration, and teachers) themselves are audiences for cooperative education. In most cases, school personnel must be taught about cooperatives. Further, materials are needed for effective teaching, and, as recipients, teachers and others are audiences for whom specially designed efforts must be made.

Little cooperative education is conducted in elementary schools (all levels prior to high school). Some material is available to support cooperative education, but is of a localized nature. A teaching resource package, including a new video on four ways of doing business, called "Business in Our Town," is available from the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives. It serves most needs for basic teaching materials. Direct assistance from cooperatives will be necessary to place these and other appropriate materials in local schools.

Secondary-Level Students and Schools As with elementary education, both high school students and schools

are audiences for cooperative education. A greater amount of cooperative education is present in high schools, although mostly limited to agricultural education programs. At this level, a fuller description of cooperatives is possible within general business, social studies, or economic classes. Effective teaching techniques include working examples, practicums, and hands-on acquaintance with local cooperatives. High school students often focus on specific areas of interest. Cooperative subjects may be tailored to special programs, such as vocational agricultural programs. However, students in all programs are suitable for cooperative education.

The greatest challenge for cooperative education in elementary and secondary schools is motivating school systems to include cooperative topics. Three considerations will determine its success.

First, any material or encouragement for cooperative education must fit into a school system's curriculum. Curriculum requirements should be studied for each school system to see how cooperative education can best be adopted. Within this context, teachers must be given enough information and supporting material so they can teach the elements with limited preparation.

Second, the instigation of education must also be targeted to those most likely to influence its acceptance and implementation. Whether the primary targets are teachers, local administration, or State administration will depend upon each State's characteristics. For the most part, the main burden of encouraging cooperative education will fall on cooperatives in the local area.

Third, a major effort will be required to expand cooperative education at the high school level beyond agriculture. The vision for cooperative education suggests such an expansion, but the separation of many agricultural programs from the remainder of the system makes transfer difficult in most situations. Support for teacher training, purchase of educational

materials, and other support may be required to follow up on motivating cooperative education.

Cooperatives and their associations will bear the burden of this support. The ACS self-contained course "Understanding Cooperatives" fills the need for innovative education at this level. With the support and encouragement of cooperatives and State councils, units of "Understanding Cooperatives" have been placed in secondary schools in several States. Continued and expanded support of this nature is needed.

In summary, *cooperative education will only be included in the public school systems if individuals within the system are convinced of its value in the general curriculum, appropriate materials are available, and widespread and intensive efforts are made by cooperatives and their associations to support and implement its adoption.*

Universities, Students, and Researchers In most cases, cooperative education at the university level is tied specifically to course work. Not all majors require courses in which cooperative topics are appropriate. However, cooperative topics should be included in courses that address business, economics, management, accounting, or organizational subjects. In some instances, separate courses on cooperatives are appropriate. The level of presentation will, of course, vary widely depending on the course level and purpose. Cooperative education is also needed in graduate and professional schools.

Research is usually considered to be an integral part of the university educational mission. University researchers are audiences for material on cooperatives and they, in turn, generate products that can become integrated into teaching roles. As in teaching, university research on cooperatives should be expanded beyond the traditional agricultural economics curricula.

Cooperative education at the university level varies from entire courses to no coverage at all. For the most part, cooperative topics are covered only in the agricultural schools and not as part of more general business, accounting, and economic curricula. Teaching materials on cooperatives are limited, save for individual interest by professors, to the textbook, *Cooperatives in Agriculture*.

Expanded cooperative education at the university level will require more suitable teaching materials, introduction into nonagricultural areas, and a major familiarization of faculty with the role and importance of cooperative businesses.

Teaching materials must be tailored to course work. The need for a full text on cooperatives is limited, because seldom will a full course on cooperatives be offered outside agriculture. Under ideal circumstances, each textbook on business, economics, or other related subjects would contain material on cooperatives that is relevant to the text subject. Lacking that, short addenda to existing texts may be appropriate. Resource materials on cooperative topics that can be incorporated into more general courses must be made more widely available.

The challenge is, as with other school systems, to motivate the university system to include cooperative topics as part of its instructional system. Also as with other school systems, *the burden will fall on cooperatives themselves, working through whatever channels are appropriate in the system to express their desires for cooperative education.*

Funding is important, particularly in research. If cooperatives expect cooperative research to occur, they must determine how to support the educational system and researcher to make that resource commitment possible.

Education Support Organizations Cooperative education planning must involve the many organizations that support educational institutions or groups of students, including adults. Examples are FFA, 4-H, National Vocational Agricultural Teachers Association, National Association of

County Agricultural Agents, Ag in the Classroom, farm organizations, and various committees on special areas of education. These organizations are extremely active in the education of youth and play an important role in establishing priorities in public school curriculum development. They also become audiences for cooperative education depending upon what they do for educators, schools systems, or students.

Cooperatives Cooperatives, themselves, are audiences for cooperative education when they engage an educational activity and establish a demand for materials, programs, courses, or funding. Cooperatives' educational activities and their needs vary widely. As examples, cooperatives may have director, member, and young farmer programs; participate in youth programs; distribute information about cooperatives; participate in State cooperative council activities; or have programs designed for public information about cooperatives.

Cooperative Members Successful cooperatives typically have members who understand their obligations to the cooperative in governance or control, financial obligations, and patronage. An appreciation for these obligations is conveyed through educational activities. The narrower subject of cooperative education, the special characteristics of cooperative business enterprises, is often combined with marketing information and programs aimed at developing loyalty and expressing benefits to members. Education for members depends on the cooperative's specific member education goals. Members may receive education through the cooperative itself or programs associated with outside groups or through more general educational activities. In either case, cooperative members are a distinct audience for education.

Cooperative Directors Cooperative businesses place specific and unique responsibilities on directors. Because of their importance for the survival of cooperatives and their highly

specialized training needs, directors are a critical audience for cooperative education. However, director training needs are not all the same. While some skills, knowledge, and duties are common to all cooperatives, specific needs depend on cooperative size, complexity, type of business, and structure. In addition, cooperatives vary widely in their commitment to director education. Directors may receive education at a range of levels from a variety of providers.

Programs for directors vary widely in complexity, sophistication, and level of attendance. Many cooperatives draw on outside education such as State cooperative councils, the university system, and national organizations to conduct programs.

Two motivational needs exist for director education. The first is at the cooperative level. Some cooperatives are heavily committed to educating directors; others are not. Many directors are eager to attend educational programs, while others never spend the time or effort to attend. *Only if cooperatives themselves (the directors as policymakers) are committed to director education will it be conducted and the benefits of educated directors be realized.*

Cooperative Employees Cooperative employees work for a unique organization. Their effectiveness may be increased substantially if they fully understand that uniqueness and act accordingly. Some cooperatives go to great lengths to provide this education. Others make little effort to distinguish their organization from any other. The variation in employee education is great, depending on the type and wishes of the individual cooperative. Cooperatives must identify the unique characteristics of their organization as a subject for employee knowledge and training.

Other Audiences A range of other audiences with special needs for cooperative education may include policymakers, professional specialists such as accountants and lawyers, and

the general public. Each presents special challenges in how they are reached and what form educational programs and materials should take.

State Cooperative Councils Considerable cooperative education work outside individual cooperatives is conducted or facilitated by State cooperative councils. Within the group of State councils, a wide range of educational methods, funding, and audiences exists. It is not possible to identify any uniform need for educational materials or programs by councils. However, because of the role they play on behalf of their members in the cooperative community, needs of State cooperative councils as an audience for cooperative education efforts by others is given high priority.

How Have Cooperative Education Audiences Changed?

A number of changes in the audiences for cooperative education were noted during the course of Task Force deliberations. Generally, they relate to numbers of participants within each audience, changes in the backgrounds of recipients, changing attitudes and expectations, and competition for individuals' time for educational activities.

One significant change in the audience for cooperative education relating to farmer cooperatives is the decline in the size of a traditional primary audience—students from farm backgrounds. The number of farm students entering various agricultural or agribusiness fields of study has clearly declined. However, there is a continued interest in agricultural and food system topics by students with nonfarm backgrounds. The typical agricultural student of the past may have had some association with the cooperative idea through his or her farm family's involvement. The typical urban or nonfarm student has no such familiarity.

Demographic changes are in evidence among agricultural cooperatives. The membership base of the traditional agri-

cultural cooperatives is aging. The generation moving into control of the farming sector lacks the zeal for cooperatives, patience for long-run benefits, or knowledge of what markets may be like without cooperatives.

Urban audiences have grown and with them, use of cooperatives in their daily lives. However, outside of the education within some consumer, housing, and other organizations, the nonfarm audience is largely untouched by cooperative education. Cooperatives have never been a part of any general curriculum. The audience among urban and nonfarm individuals is large. Their needs for cooperative education are more varied than for the traditional recipient. The broad range of circumstances under which cooperatives may be used, wide range of membership interests, and greater variety of forms such cooperatives may take, distinguish this audience group from the traditional farmer audience.

Overall, characteristics of the typical audience member for cooperative education have changed considerably—less farm or rural and more nonfarm or urban; less farm, more non-farm. Further, the distinction between the rural and urban components of the audience, as well as between geographic division, has been blurred. For all the diversity in the United States, common cultural exposure and experience have grown, largely a result of the influence of a common media and entertainment system. Nationally, the 15-to-30 year old group of residents is extremely small, resulting in overcapacity in our education system. This will be somewhat alleviated with the aging of the so-called "second baby boomlet." But, this will likely bring some fundamental changes in education philosophy.

The typical audience member for cooperative education presents a greater challenge to the educator. Self-interest is more dominant than the common good philosophy traditionally associated with cooperative efforts. For cooperative education, this needs to be recognized, accepted, and accommodated.

The greatest challenge in reaching most potential audiences for cooperative education is winning the competition for the individual's time in our school systems—both the student and teacher. People have increasing demands on their time and less willingness to commit large blocks of time to any particular endeavor. Many have argued that the problems associated with this unwillingness is compounded by a declining attention span. Thus, educators are challenged with problems of both willingness and ability for certain types of educational activity.

Similar challenges face nonstudents. Employees, members, and directors have limited time for educational activities. Each program must compete effectively with myriad other activities.

The contemporary audience is more technologically advanced. It expects technology to make things interesting and encourage them to be involved. It wants technology to take the drudgery out of learning. It associates information technology with entertainment and fun.

Finally, the contemporary audience is questioning, sometimes to the point of being cynical. Any effective cooperative education program must be of the highest quality, based on proof, not promises, explanation, not preaching. The changes in audience characteristics are mirrored in the changing characteristics of educators themselves. Teaching tools must be designed with the needs and traits of both the students and educators in mind.

PART III: IDENTIFIED SYSTEM NEEDS

Each audience and cooperative education provider has certain specialized requirements. Many were identified in the surveys and panel discussions. They are detailed in the following sections of this report.

However, several "system" needs were identified and discussed during the Task Force's study. These were usually

expressed as general concerns or goals for the overall cooperative education effort in the United States.

From these discussions, it was evident that the current state of cooperative education contains some strengths through which continuing and future cooperative education can be invigorated. These may be specific to audiences or providers or more general.

Motivation and Funding

Several needs were identified as concerns for most audiences and providers. They included concerns for general support for cooperative education and indicated the need to devote more resources to cooperative education. If the vision of cooperative education is to be fulfilled, these broader needs must be met.

Motivation for Privately Conducted Education "Privately conducted education" refers to cooperative education conducted by cooperatives themselves or through organizations they fund, such as national organizations involved in cooperative education or State cooperative councils. The education may be directed toward the cooperatives and their associated audiences (members, directors, management, employees) or may be broader educational activities. In any case, such education will not be conducted without the commitment of cooperatives themselves. The level of commitment will depend on motivation. The motivation for privately conducted education is based on differing views of education and its role in the success of cooperatives. Some of the historic support for cooperation has been lost with the passing of the generations whose survival depended upon cooperatives. Also lost was the commitment to cooperative education that necessarily accompanied that zeal. Motivation, often based on profitability calculations, has been lacking where the benefits

of cooperative education were not clearly articulated or proven.

A high level of cooperative education, supported by cooperatives, requires considerable motivation. The Task Force heard calls for renewed dedication to cooperative education and a focus at the cooperative level on motivation for providing or supporting it.

The consensus was that unless cooperatives themselves are motivated to provide privately conducted education themselves or through organizations they fund, few other efforts will be successful.

Funding for Privately Conducted Education Closely associated with motivation is the need for funding of privately conducted cooperative education. Without funds, little can be done. Funding for these programs comes almost exclusively from resources dedicated to that purpose by cooperatives themselves. Programs and materials come directly from the cooperative. Educational activities conducted by State cooperative councils or national organizations are funded by cooperatives through dues or fees.

The Task Force saw the close connection between motivation and funding. *Motivation for cooperative education must be clear and strong, or it won't be translated into funding for specific cooperative education projects and programs.* In addition, motivation by various participants will determine where and for what purpose funds will be supplied.

Motivation for Public Education Public education that includes cooperative concepts, at all levels of the public school system, will not exist without a motivating force to be sure cooperative topics are included in subjects at appropriate times.

Any effort to encourage public education systems to include cooperative topics must be tailored to things relevant to the school system. School systems have broad missions

around which their activities and course work is designed. The value of cooperative education must be demonstrated in the context of how public education systems work, what their goals are, and what they need in return.

While the overall value of cooperative education may be broadly stated, efforts in schools to encourage cooperative education must be carefully directed within each system. This includes subject matter and persons to contact. Cooperative education must correspond to particular subject matter covered within a school system's curriculum. It must be shown how cooperative education relates to specific topics the school is required to teach and how cooperative education materials or programs satisfies those specific needs.

At the same time, the public value of cooperative education must be demonstrated. In some systems the importance of the cooperative form of business enterprise may be evident. In most, however, it will be necessary to educate the system about the importance of cooperatives and, more directly, the importance of cooperative education to the general student population.

Finally, public education on cooperatives will not take place unless cooperatives convince the public that it should be part of the public education system. Motivation and encouragement must come from cooperatives, individually and through appropriate organizations.

Without private commitment to cooperative education and its transfer to the public, cooperative education will not find a significant place in the American public school systems.

Funding for Public Education Any new burden on public education systems imposed by the addition of cooperative education courses or units competes for an already critically limited pool of time and resources. If cooperative topics are to be added, the public education systems' predicament must be recognized and alternatives that adapt to and accommodate these limitations explored.

Although direct contribution by cooperatives to fund public education on cooperatives is limited, alternatives may include providing materials to school systems at cooperatives' expense to avoid additional direct outlays by the public. This approach has been successfully used by cooperative organizations in some States where ACS's "Understanding Cooperatives" has been placed in secondary schools. A similar approach at the elementary school level with NCFC's "Business in Our Town" is recommended. In addition, materials and subject matter may be designed so that other related school system needs are met at the same time cooperative topics are included. Packages that cover general business subjects for the system, for instance, could include cooperative subjects.

Acknowledgement of the limited public resources available for cooperative education must be part of any plan to include the subject in public education systems at any level.

Sense of Cooperative Community In all discussion panel meetings, panelists indicated that cooperative education will be strengthened immeasurably if all types of cooperatives recognize their common interest and the collective benefit received from effective cooperative education. Although variation exists in emphasis, forums, and purposes of education among types of cooperatives, a great common core of educational principles, needs, and benefits was found. Only if the sense of community in cooperative education is clearly identified and tapped will the full vision of cooperative education be within reach.

Technology and Materials

Audience-Specific Materials Except for some specialized situations, the basic content and materials for cooperative education are well defined and have been developed in many ways over the years. However, any program, set of materials,

or other activity involving cooperative education must be tailored to the individual audience and circumstances, as well as to the individual instructor. Who provides the needed resources and how finely honed the packages should be depends on needs and circumstances. Unless educational materials and programs are designed to carry appropriate messages to identified audiences and education providers, the value of cooperative education will be diminished.

Availability of Materials In addition to educational materials designed for varied audiences and education providers, panelists and survey respondents emphasized that appropriate materials should be widely available.

Material should be both available and easily accessible so requests can be quickly filled. This suggests pools of available materials ready for use under a wide variety of circumstances. When materials are accessible, both duplication and the per unit cost of producing materials are reduced.

In summary, easily accessible material on cooperative education will not only increase the ease and efficiency of existing educational activities, but also facilitate new programs.

Technologies and Media The Task Force heard considerable discussion about the need to use the best technology available for contemporary cooperative education. But, the most advanced technology may not always be the most appropriate.

The core of materials used in cooperative education will include written materials and visuals, videos, and computer-based packages for personal computers. These materials will stand alone or be packaged in integrated teaching modules. Educators and students alike will avoid technologies that require a substantial investment in learning the technology. While the Task Force believes more sophisticated technologies provide potential for creating innovative and exciting teaching materials and methods, it is essential at this juncture to

focus resources on doing a complete job with a given set of mainstream technologies. *Advances in educational technologies should not be mistaken for advances in education. Emphasis should be placed on quality media and technologies that are widely available, highly adaptable, relatively simple to learn and use, and completely flexible in terms of the timing and duration of use.*

Filling the gaps in current offerings of these mainstream technologies should be the primary developmental effort of material and program designers. Many topics and audiences remain untouched in terms of video presentation. Use of simulations and computer game approaches are just beginning to demonstrate their usefulness. At the same time, material developers should keep abreast of new and emerging developments in media technology.

PART IV. BLUEPRINT FOR CHANGE

To make the necessary changes occur, the Task Force proposes a long-term strategy for revitalizing the national effort in cooperative education. It is designed to gradually change the present trends and establish momentum toward greater commitment and improve effectiveness in our cooperative education programs.

The blueprint for an improved cooperative education program has three strategic dimensions: preparation, provision, and promotion. We need to prepare our cooperatives, institutions, and educational professionals to meet the training needs of tomorrow. Cooperatives, their organizations, and supporting organizations must provide the materials and programs to make sure this training happens. The concepts and importance of cooperative education must be promoted to those who can influence its adoption.

Segregation of cooperative education between its agricultural and nonagricultural components cannot be maintained. The agricultural parts of the cooperative education system have led the way in promoting public programs for coopera-

tive education, but this history has left much of the present system isolated from and out of touch with the needs of the nonagricultural component of the cooperative community. Nonagricultural cooperatives, while generally strong on cooperative education within individual organizations, need to support and promote cooperative education in the public arena.

The Message of Cooperative Education

The basic orientation for cooperative education must be one of self-interest: Serving individual interests through group action. Recipients of cooperative education must be shown how the cooperative form of organization can benefit them personally and be meaningful in their daily lives.

An essential message in all levels of cooperative education is the role played by cooperatives within the contemporary business system. Cooperatives must be presented as an organizational option within the American business system with some specific attributes and applications. Cooperatives must be presented as a method for solving economic problems...a tool for making things happen. Audiences must be shown how cooperative business principles can be applied to their individual situations.

Cooperative principles provide the primary message for cooperative education. While many topics should be presented within a complete education on cooperatives, the message should be constantly tied back to principles in a form that is clear and easily understood.

The user- and member-driven focus of the cooperative form of business must be maintained. User responsibility in decisionmaking, planning, financing, and control must always be stressed.

What Are the Priorities for Change?

Materials must be designed to meet the needs of specific audiences or types of audiences. Recipients of cooperative education will quickly lose interest in materials not sharply focused to their individual requirements or circumstances. What this means for material developers and providers is that depending on a single presentation or a specific topic will not be sufficient. If, for example, the topic is director rights and responsibilities, different versions should be developed for several audiences, including directors, managers, youth, and members. Each version should present a different perspective, with examples and details designed for that perspective.

Materials must be individualized both in use and in message. Distance learning, small group methods, or one-on-one learning will be of increasing importance in some circumstances. Materials and systems that constrain the educator/facilitator or the audience in terms of timing or content will lose out to those that don't. Materials and programs must be built using technologies that allow the individual user to have complete control over the timing or schedule of use. Dependence on linkages to larger systems is undesirable.

Material and program developers must focus on hands-on activities and approaches. Case studies, computer games, simulations, contests, and other approaches that get education recipients involved are favored. Many concepts are best taught within the context of real problems and situations. Strictly theoretical presentations have little appeal.

Materials and programs must adapt to short learning periods. Messages must be simple and practical. Programs must be segmented to make them easy to pick up and put down. The end-user must maintain maximum control.

An important part of improving the materials and programs available for cooperative education involves modernizing the images. Materials need to reflect a contemporary view of daily life, business, and agriculture, avoiding sexist and stereotypical images.

Many organizations, especially cooperatives, want materials that carry their logos or are specific to their individual organizations. This suggests a strategy of developing sets of base materials that can be adapted and reproduced by individual groups. Adaptation guides to suit specific audiences or purposes should be an integral part of the basic sets.

Essential to the widespread growth of cooperative education is a core of educators knowledgeable in, and capable of providing training on cooperatives and cooperative issues. An extensive effort in training this vital educator core is required. This effort will represent the primary investment in the cooperative education infrastructure—the investment in human capital. Four key educator groups can be targeted for this training or retraining effort: County or State extension personnel; secondary-level teachers of agricultural education; general business and social studies, university teachers in agribusiness and business; and education specialists within cooperatives.

The nearly automatic assignment by schools and universities of cooperative education to agricultural departments or programs must change. Cooperatives are not limited to agriculture. Bridges must be built between agricultural and other segments of our educational system, especially in the fields of business, economics, and sociology. Collaborative research and curriculum development is required.

A major challenge facing both providers and users of education materials is bringing the two groups together. Knowledge of availability of material and programs was repeatedly identified as a problem constraining the teaching of cooperative concepts. In part, this is a problem of materials simply not being offered for certain types of audiences. However, it appears that the larger problem is an institutional one. Materials are available, yet their availability has not been sufficiently promoted.

The need to improve awareness of the range of educational tools and programs available throughout the country

and to increase widespread access to tools and programs will require a concentrated effort by organizations and institutions involved in the production and distribution of cooperative education materials. The current approach is fractionalized and incomplete, operated by each producer/provider, each reaching out to specific segments of the total audience. The full system of material production and distribution lacks coordination and leaves many audiences and potential audiences inadequately served. As a result, some audiences are missed while other efforts are duplicated. The distribution of materials is incomplete.

A national coordinating clearinghouse is needed. The purpose of the proposed clearinghouse would be to collect information and descriptions of cooperative education tools, programs, and other resources available from all segments of the cooperative community. The information would be readily available to all cooperatives, educational institutions, and organizations involved in cooperative education. An on-line computerized database system could be used to catalogue existing tools, programs, and materials, receive information of new offerings as they become available, and publicize the availability of materials. Most important, the proposed system would enable cooperative education providers to scan the complete set of offerings to determine the existence of materials or programs suiting their needs and assist in obtaining them.

The clearinghouse could also provide a speaker bureau function. The list of available quality speakers for a range of topics and audiences could be maintained, providing many cooperatives and educators with a ready source of the type of presenters they need for their educational programs.

Two requirements are absolutely essential to the viability of the clearinghouse that includes participation by all components of the cooperative community. First, the system would need to be constantly updated to ensure that at any point in time, all that is available will be on the system. Second, merely

focusing on one component, such as agricultural cooperatives, would partially duplicate some existing efforts—though perhaps improving upon them—without substantially contributing to the expansion and coordination so badly needed by the total community.

The "clearinghouse" function envisioned by the Task Force is a substantial undertaking. The mission statement of National Council of Farmer Cooperatives mandates that NCFC serve "as an educational resource center, central clearinghouse and coordinator to stimulate use of those educational and training materials and ideas that are available through cooperatives, educational institutions, and others in all parts of the country." The mission, along with current activities such as publication of the "Educational Resources Guide" that lists educational materials,programs, and courses, may provide the institutional framework for the serious need for information exchange and resulting efficiency in cooperative education.

However, to fully satisfy the needs identified by the Task Force, significant expansion of present activities will be required. Funding, broad-based support, and cooperation will be necessary.

How Can We Bring About the Necessary Changes?

Cooperative education doesn't just happen. Somewhere along the line, someone has to decide to participate in cooperative education—to provide it, encourage it, or make use of it. The basic problem in cooperative education today is how to encourage those who should be involved with cooperative education to make a positive decision to do so. The true issue is incentives.

In the most general terms, individuals, institutions, or cooperatives have the incentive to become involved in cooperative education when they perceive involvement will contribute toward the achievement of their goals. Out of this, we

define two strategies for stimulating more involvement in education: (1) We can establish, encourage, or promote adoption of goals that support cooperative education, or (2) We can alter the perception of how cooperative education can contribute to the achievement of existing goals.

The first strategy involves a range of possibilities including performance evaluation criteria at the personnel and organizational level. For example, a cooperative manager might have a performance standard that specifies a cooperative education program for all new employees will be conducted. Another approach includes training or certification standards for holding certain positions, such as cooperative directors. For example, a cooperative could require that a newly elected board member complete a director training program offered by the cooperative council in that State within the first year of his or her term. Covenants could be attached to loans, employment agreements, or marketing agreements that require some acceptable level of education or training. An example might be a requirement written into the terms of a loan from CoBank to qualify for a loan. The cooperative would be required to send its board or management team through an intensive cooperative education course.

Fundamental to the first strategy is explicit recognition of the goals of each significant party to the cooperative education process and how the process relates to those goals. This represents the "how" of getting cooperative education on the priority list. It is the carrot on the stick. For example, the objective of the banker is to make loans with a high probability of repayment. When an educated board increases the likelihood of timely loan repayment, the bank has incentive to encourage education. When new board members perceive that cooperative education will give them more influence over the cooperative's decisions, they will be more likely to seek training. When the cooperative's management is directed to carry out an extensive member education program, it will have more incentive to increase investment in education.

The second basic strategy involves doing a better job of relating cooperative education activities to the existing goals of individuals and organizations involved with cooperatives. This strategy is really the mirror image of the first. We are concerned with measuring the performance of cooperative education programs related to the established goals of the individual or organizations involved.

In the past, the contribution of cooperative education to the goals of cooperatives and individuals involved with them has often been widely alleged and treated as gospel truth. Today we are challenged to put some meat on those claims. Unsupported rhetoric won't effectively sell the cooperative education idea. Contemporary leaders and decisionmakers want proof.

Managers may want proof that by educating the employees, cooperative profitability will be increased. The banker may want some concrete measure of how an educated board's ability to make sound business decisions will be improved by cooperative education. We may want to know if a young couple program actually results in increased support or future leadership development of the cooperative. Will an extensive youth program have a future payoff in terms of participation in cooperative activities?

In basic terms, we need tangible measures of the effect of cooperative education programs. Many cooperatives today view money spent on education as an expense, not an investment. To change that perception, we must become capable of spelling out—in concrete terms they will appreciate—the payoff to that investment.

In considering these two strategies, there are two basic questions:

1. CREATING INCENTIVES: How can we build demand for cooperative education into the incentive structure of the relevant parties?

2. MEASURING PERFORMANCE: How can we directly measure the contribution of cooperative education to the goals

of cooperative organizations and individuals involved in them?

A substantial dedication of public and private resources for research on how we can accurately measure performance of cooperative education with respect to various organizational and personal goals of participants in the cooperative and cooperative education system is required. These measurements must be made. Then we can accurately and objectively demonstrate the payoff to cooperative education and the issue of creating incentives will take care of itself.

PART V. A THREE-FRONT PLAN FOR STRENGTHENING COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

The Task Force proposes a three-front plan for renewing the cooperative education system. The plan involves constructing a public-private partnership for strengthening a resource infrastructure for cooperative education and promoting its adoption. Conceptually, we must look at cooperative education as a product that must be designed, developed, and sold to a specific customer base. Critical to this concept is the development of demand for cooperative education, by students, educators, and the cooperatives themselves.

FRONT I: Making the Investment

Front 1 involves the redevelopment of the resource base, materials, and human expertise for providing cooperative education. The basic product must be redesigned and promotional materials developed to support marketing of the product. Advance funding is needed to stimulate this critical ongoing effort. All currently available materials must be assessed.

Update and Expand Materials Base Materials must be updated or developed that are based on current teaching methods and reflect contemporary images. Basic materials

should be adaptable to the range of cooperative organization types, not limited to specific industries such as agriculture. Where appropriate, materials must be more basic and to the point, less focused on promotion of a philosophy, and less demanding of a person's time and attention. Materials must become more sophisticated to satisfy the audience. Materials must be flexible enough so they can be used in a variety of settings and educational environments, and adapted by individual organizations to meet their specific needs.

Audiences that need particular focus are cooperative directors, nonfarm students and adults, and cooperative employees. While some good director training programs and materials do exist, several voids are evident, particularly at the local and consumer cooperative levels. Materials directed at nonfarm cooperative members, potential members, and students are generally nonexistent. Materials for cooperative employees are often inadequate and tread lightly on purely cooperative education aspects of training.

Educate the Educators Knowledge about cooperatives and the ability to extend the knowledge base needs to be reestablished among key educator groups throughout the country. New educators must be added to the ranks of those trained in and teaching the cooperative form of business. A coordinated program for training small business advisors and State and county extension agents—both agricultural and nonagricultural business specialists—needs to be established. This group will be critical in future efforts for developing both rural and urban America. They must have a working knowledge of the cooperative as a development tool. The program must be coordinated at the national level if it is to achieve economy of scale and be effective.

Agricultural education teachers need to become better trained in cooperatives. Programs for earning Continuing Education Units in cooperative education must be expanded and promoted. Promotion and training must be expanded to

encourage use of existing teaching packages, such as the Agricultural Cooperative Service's "Understanding Cooperatives."

Educators in business and agribusiness at both the secondary and university level need to be educated on and encouraged to incorporate the cooperative form of business into their courses. Appropriate materials for the general business curricula must be made available. At the university level, interest in and content of classroom teaching are greatly influenced by the content of academic research conducted by university staff. Therefore, research needs to be encouraged within the business and management departments paralleling that done within many agricultural business and economics departments. Funding for research and establishment of research focus groups or consortia are needed.

Performance-Related Research Research is required on how cooperative education contributes to the achievement of various organizational goals and objectives. Given the findings of this research, promoters and advocates of cooperative education will have a much more solid base upon which to make their case to the cooperative managers and directors, educational leaders, and other key decisionmakers. Solid research findings will allow presentation of objective facts. A major investment of public and private research money is required to carry out this critical research.

FRONT II: Improving National Coordination

National level coordination must constantly be pursued. Without diligent attention, natural forces lead to fragmentation. Leaders of organizations involved in producing and providing educational materials and programs must dedicate themselves to improving and maintaining a coordinated, integrated system. Certain national-level forums, such as the National Institute on Cooperative Education and the national

clearinghouse for cooperative education materials and programs, can serve as catalysts for bringing together various groups involved in cooperative education.

No existing structure brings together all components of the cooperative education system. The Task Force believes it is imperative that some method of communication and exchange be devised to associate and link all cooperative education interests with appropriate segments of the public education system.

FRONT III: Expanding the Base of Support

Cooperative education must be aggressively supported by cooperative leaders. Supported by the tools and research described in Front I and renewed national support evidenced by Front II developments, the real marketing job can begin.

While there are many audiences and decisionmaker groups that can make a true contribution toward the encouragement of cooperative education, the real impetus must come from cooperatives themselves. Unless operating cooperatives fully believe in and support cooperative education efforts, it is difficult to maintain the argument that cooperative education is of any value. We must get the leaders of these critical organizations to fully embrace the concepts and importance of cooperative education. In the future, that foundation should be laid early in their careers.

Cooperative managers and board chairpersons need to invest themselves in the principles and purposes of cooperative education. These individuals will have the greatest influence on investment and involvement by cooperatives in cooperative education programs. They must be convinced that it is in their best interest as individuals and as organizational leaders to give full support to cooperative education. A general manager or board chair dedicated to the goals of cooperative education will see that the job gets done. These individuals must be the targets of a concentrated marketing effort by lead-

ers of educational organizations and institutions, bolstered by the research findings that clarify the payoff to investment in education.

While there are many approaches which can be effective in reaching managers and board chairpersons, the most effective is a strong one-on-one presentation by a respected peer. A core of managers and directors willing to serve as promoters and primary salespersons for cooperative education needs to be identified and coordinated, each equipped with the necessary information and support to visit fellow managers and directors. Similar direct approaches need to be made to key individuals in positions to influence the content and direction of curricula and training programs in the universities and secondary schools.

This three-front plan does not promise immediate results, but sets a course for change that will serve the needs of cooperative education over the next 10 years. Cooperatives are in business to serve the long-term needs of their members. We must bring that same long-term perspective to designing our future cooperative education system.

APPENDIX I

The Cooperative Education Task Force is a joint research project between USDA's Agricultural Cooperative Service (ACS) and National Council of Farmer Cooperatives (NCFC) to assess the projected needs and issues for cooperative education programs. This project combine NCFC's implementation of two education grants—one from CENEX and another from MSI Insurance Foundation. It presented an opportunity to make efficient use of time and money toward a common goal.

Identified objectives of the project were:

- Evaluate printed materials, visual and electronic teaching tools, and instructional programs widely used in cooperative education;
- Study the needs for integrated learning systems to educate members, directors, managers, students, and the general public on an individual basis;
- Evaluate the need for methodology to determine the success or value of cooperative education programs to cooperative businesses;
- Determine the groups that require cooperative education, how to coordinate efforts of cooperative educators, and examine appropriate delivery methods;
- Identify groups requiring cooperative education to meet structural business changes;
- Explore methods needed to blend existing educational programs and materials through use of emerging technology; and
- Establish priorities to better allocate public and private research devoted to cooperative education.

Survey: The first stage of the project was a mail survey conducted among selected cooperative and professional educators to determine current practices and project future issues in cooperative education. About 1,300 questionnaires were sent out in February 1992. They were divided into five groups: General, Cooperative Employees, Educators, Universities, and

State Councils. Results were sent to ACS for analysis and tabulation.

Focus Groups and Panel Discussions: The second stage of this project was a series of regional panel discussions during 1992.

April 20, 21 — Minneapolis, MN
April 23, 24 — San Francisco, CA
May 11, 12 — Kansas City, MO
May 14, 15 — Atlanta, GA

Each focus group included 20 persons selected by region and interest area. Preliminary results of the survey were used to identify topics and guide discussion. Regional meetings were specifically designed to meet requirements of the CENEX grant. State cooperative councils were involved in participant selection as well as all other phases of the project. A special focus group met before each panel discussion focusing on special topics such as youth and young adult education.

Blue Ribbon Panel: Several major issues were discussed by a "blue ribbon" panel at the National Institute on Cooperative Education (NICE), July 20-23, in Denver, CO. Panelists were: Curtis Anderson, Bruce Anderson, Douglas Johnson, and Carlyle Teague.

Focus Group and Panel Participants

Minneapolis, MN
April 20-21, 1992

O. Glenn Webb (moderator)
GROWMARK, Inc.
Tunnel Hill, IL

Michael J. Abildtrup
Farmers Cooperative Elevator Company
Iowa Falls, IA

Bruce Anderson
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY

Neil Anderson
AgriBank - FCB
St. Paul, MN

Joan Behr
Wisconsin Dairies Cooperatives
Baraboo, WI

Dave Belina
Land O'Lakes, Inc.
Minneapolis, MN

Frank Blackburn
Minnesota Association of Cooperatives
St. Paul, MN

John Croft
GROWMARK, Inc.
Bloomington, IL

Robert Cropp
University Center for Cooperatives
Madison, WI

Paul Day
Minnesota Department of Education
St. Paul, MN

Dean Denhart
Countrymark Cooperative, Inc.
Indianapolis, IN

Everett Dobrinski
St. Paul Bank for Cooperatives
Makoti, ND

Ed Ellison
Harvest States Cooperatives
Elbow Lake, MN

David Erickson
Wisconsin Federation of Cooperatives
Madison, WI

Allen Gerber
Minnesota Association of Cooperatives
St. Paul, MN

Mike Gustafson
Cass County Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Kindred, ND

Cathy A. Hamlett
Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA

Ann Hoyt
University Center for Cooperatives
Madison, WI

Douglas Johnson
CENEX
Sidney, MT

Patrick O'Donnell
National Grape Co-operative Association
Westfield, NY

Bill Perry
Milk Marketing, Inc.
Strongsville, OH

Brian H. Schmiesing
Southwest State University
Marshall, MN

Del Schmidt
Harvest States Cooperatives
St. Paul, MN

Susan Tigner
Harvest States Cooperatives
St. Paul, MN

Elaine Tobin
South Dakota Farmers Union
Huron, SD

San Francisco, CA
April 23-24, 1992

Curtis Anderson (moderator)
Sunkist Growers, Inc.
Van Nuys, CA

David Aeilts
South Dakota Wheat Growers Association
Aberdeen, SD

John Annaloro
California Credit Union League
Pomona, CA

E. Kim Coontz
Center for Cooperatives
Davis, CA

Steven W. Easter
Blue Diamond Growers
Sacramento, CA

Richard Fenwick
CoBank
Denver, CO

Bonnie Fish
Twin Pines Foundation
Berkeley, CA

Valerie Foster
North Coast Cooperative
Eureka, CA

Bob Holloway
CENEX/Land O'Lakes Agronomy Co.
Medical Lake, WA

David H. Kirkpatrick
Nat'l Economic Development & Law Center
Berkeley, CA

Gene Lundquist
Calcot, Ltd.
Bakersfield, CA

Bill Peal
Pendleton High School
Pendleton, OR

Harry Rolfi
Mid-Valley Cotton Growers, Inc.
Tipton, CA

Leland H. Ruth
Agricultural Council of California
Sacramento, CA

Robert Scherer
National Cooperative Business Association
Washington, D.C.

Jerry Siebert
University of California - Berkeley
Berkeley, CA

Theresa Steig
Puget Consumers' Co-op
Seattle, WA

Hank Wallace
California State University
Chico, CA

Herschel Weeks
Oregon State University
Corvallis, OR

John Welty
California Tomato Growers Association
Stockton, CA

Karen Zimbelman
Training & Consulting
Arcata, CA

Kansas City, MO
May 11-12, 1992

Michael Cook (moderator)
University of Missouri
Columbia, MO

Bruce Bainbridge
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO

David G. Barton
Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS

Dennis Blick
CoBank
Wichita, KS

Jerry Bottinger
Owner of Bottinger Farms
Denton, KS

Theresa Carbrey
New Pioneer Co-op Fresh Food Market
Iowa City, IA

David Carter
National Farmers Union
Denver, CO

Billy L. Conner
Texas Agricultural Cooperative Council
Austin, TX

Charles L. Cramer
University of Missouri
Columbia, MO

Philip Dukes
Farmers Cooperative Association
Marathon, IA

Kirk Edney
Texas Education Agency
Austin, TX

Robert Ferguson
MFA, Inc.
Columbia, MO

Keith Heim
Farm Service Cooperative
Harlan, IA

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Robert E. Lee
Kansas Farmers Service Association
Hutchinson, KS

Joseph A. Lieber
Kansas Cooperative Council
Topeka, KS

Jim Magnuson
Iowa Institute for Cooperatives
Ames, IA

Daryl Meyer
Brown County Cooperative
Hiawatha, KS

Bill J. Ohlemeier
Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc.
Topeka, KS

Walter L. Patterson, Jr.
Nebraska Cooperative Council
Lincoln, NE

Myron D. Schmidt
Associated Milk Producers, Inc.
Newton, KS

Lee Schmucker
Kansas Credit Union Association
Wichita, KS

Rich Sipe
Farmland Industries, Inc.
Liberty, MO

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Eliza Strode
Oberlin Co-op Bookstore
Oberlin, OH

Michael Turner
University of Nebraska
Lincoln, NE

Atlanta, GA
May 14-15, 1992

Jim Loftis (moderator)
Gold Kist Inc.
Atlanta, GA

John L. Adrian
Auburn University
Auburn University, AL

Ronald C. Atkinson
University of Georgia
Athens, GA

William R. Clayton
CoBank
Atlanta, GA

Magid A. Dagher
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff
Pine Bluff, AR

Carroll H. Gilbert
Southern States Cooperative, Inc.
Richmond, VA

Dunn LeDoux
Louisiana FFA Foundation
Denham Springs, LA

Barbara Lewis
Clemson Extension Office
Allendale, SC

Alan Mathewson
Sevananda Natural Foods Co-op Grocery
Atlanta, GA

Genia McKee
HEAD Corp./Central Appalachian Peoples Federal Credit Union
Berea, KY

Thomas J. McNutt
Ohio Council of Cooperatives, Inc.
Hilliard, OH

David O. Miller
Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company
Newark, OH

Rubert W. Prevatt
Florida Southern College
Lakeland, FL

James Reeder
Maryland & Virginia Milk Producers

Cooperative Association, Inc.
Reston, VA

Donald M. Robinson
Pennsylvania Council of Cooperatives
New Holland, PA

Alice Smith
Georgia Department of Education
Atlanta, GA

Dave Snyder
Ashland High School
Ashland, OH

Hal E. Tatum
National Association of County Agricultural Agents
Atlanta, GA

Carlyle Teague
Cooperative Council of North Carolina
Raleigh, NC

W.R. Walker, Jr.
Hathaway FFA
Iowa, LA

Lionel Williamson
University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Agricultural Cooperative Service

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Agricultural Cooperative Service (ACS) provides research, management, and educational assistance to cooperatives to strengthen the economic position of farmers and other rural residents. It works directly with cooperative leaders and Federal and State agencies to improve organization, leadership, and operation of cooperatives and to give guidance to further development.

The agency (1) helps farmers and other rural residents develop cooperatives to obtain supplies and services at lower cost and to get better prices for products they sell; (2) advises rural residents on developing existing resources through cooperative action to enhance rural living; (3) helps cooperatives improve services and operating efficiency; (4) informs members, directors, employees, and the public on how cooperatives work and benefit their members and their communities; and (5) encourages international cooperative programs.

ACS publishes research and educational materials and issues *Farmer Cooperatives* magazine. All programs and activities are conducted on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, creed, color, sex, age, marital status, handicap, or national origin.

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